

The most notable distinction between living and inanimate things is that the former maintain themselves by renewal. A stone when struck resists. If its resistance is greater than the force of the blow struck, it remains outwardly unchanged. Otherwise, it is shattered into smaller bits. Never does the stone attempt to react in such a way that it may maintain itself against the blow, much less so as to render the blow a contributing factor to its own continued action. While the living thing may easily be crushed by superior force, it none the less tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education* [with Biographical Introduction] (p. 1). Neeland Media LLC. Kindle Edition.

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Lines like the supposed Einstein quote above reinforce an idea that is actually quite dangerous to education generally: the idea that some people are just good at some things and some are not. This notion is anathema to education because the whole notion of learning is that you can, well, learn things. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to have a special “math brain” to be able to understand the Pythagorean Theorem. And you don't have to be “good at English” to be able to write a decent analysis of *Death of a Salesman*.

We barely acquired the ability to speak; and yet are not able to grasp the nature of this, to man, amazing skill, and he needs training in its proper use (i.e., training in conceptualization).

It is psycho-epistemological training that Dr. Montessori had in mind (though this is not her term), when she wrote the following about her method:

“The didactic material, in fact, does not offer to the child the ‘content’ of the mind, but the order for that ‘content.’ ... The mind has formed itself by a special exercise of attention, observing, comparing, and classifying.

The process of forming, integrating and using concepts is not an automatic, but a volitional process—i.e., a process which uses both new and automatized material, but which is directed volitionally. It is not an innate, but an acquired skill; it has to be learned—it is the most crucially important part of learning—and all of man's other capacities depend on how well or how badly he learns it. Man's conscious mind observes and establishes connections among his experiences; the subconscious integrates the connections and makes them become automatic.

Rand, Ayn. *The Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (p. 56). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.